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Muhammad Iqbal's Concept of Islam

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Life is a totality, to understand this; man has taken refuge in philosophy, poetry and religion. Religion illumines the complex bonding of composition of life by linking the individual with the self beyond metaself. Philosophy urges to untie the reality into a comprehensible form by divulging into human understanding and thought. Poetry and creative literature discover the life and its phenomena. In various ages and regions man is seen entangled in these three genres to pave and unfold the road to human understanding of life. Iqbal utilizes these three genres to understand the discourse of life. He is at a time, a poet, philosopher, thinker and more over he is a religious person to his utmost. This link with the religion can be of two types dynamic and conventional; Iqbal maintains a unique balance between the two. He is conventional to this extent that while bequeathing a will for his son he says that he is follower of the 'Classic-chosen-pious people of Allah' (*Salaf Saleheen*) and he confers his will upon his son by expressing the same path to be taken.¹⁾

This approach suggests that Iqbal possesses the traditional point of view of religion. While on the same hand his dynamic view point stands alone against the criticism of so called traditional religious scholars, according to Iqbal whom may criticize his ideology merely for criticism sake.

يہ اتفاق مبارک ہو مومنوں كے ليے
كہ يك زباں ميں فقيران شہر ميرے خلاف!

2)

"My way of thinking is not acceptable to the traditional religionists. Although they do not agree with each other, but they are united in my opposition."

In his poem '*Zuhd aur Rindi*' Iqbal expresses the apprehensions of these traditional religious persons in the following words.

اس شخص كى ہم پر تو حقيقت نہيں كھلتى
ہو گا يہ كسى اور ہى اسلام كا باني

3)

"We are unable to understand, what this person actually is? — It seems, he will invent an Islam of his own."

Islam is a religion of moderation and recommends the middle path as the best option (خير الامور وسطها). It opted for the moderate approach instead of the extremist tendencies of the old

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1) Javed Iqbal. 1989. *Zinda Rood*. (All three parts in one volume). Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, p. 1069.

2) Muhammad Iqbal. 1996. "Bal e Jibreel," in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, p. 78/370.

3) Muhammad Iqbal. "Bang e Dara," in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 60.

period. When nations and states lose their authority, questions about their philosophy of life start emerging. Same happened in the subcontinent after the downfall of the Muslim authority and advent of the British rule. A number of schools of thought emerged and gave their own interpretations of Islam. In these schools of thought, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (October 17, 1817–March 27, 1898) and the religious scholars those who opposed him were prominent. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan established an educational institution at Aligarh to promote his interpretation of Islam. The religious scholars who opposed Sir Syed Ahmad Khan also established educational institutions to promote their ideologies. *Dar Ul Aloom Deoband* was one of such institutions. This institution was established by Maulana Muhammad Qasin Nanotvi (1832–1880). In the new and changed circumstances these two schools of thought were presenting conflicting interpretation of Islamic thought. A bit later, Iqbal was the connecting point of these two differing ideologies. Iqbal, though educated in the western institutions, did not breakaway with his own tradition.⁴⁾ This approach resulted in the development of a balanced moderate concept which was lacking in his contemporaries. Iqbal's moderate approach owed its development to his vast objective reading of the both sides and his concept of history.

Iqbal had examined history from a scholarly and a philosophical angle which resulted in the development of a moderate concept of history as well as religion. As this concept is different from the general and the traditional approaches, Iqbal has also informed his broad minded readers about the possible criticism from the scholars having traditional or conventional outlook. His analysis of the thought processes of various ages led him to the conclusion that in past religions had been confined within the circles of nation, race and individualism. Islam, however, established that religion is not about nation, race and individualism. In fact , it is purely a human issue. He said:

“Islam is not a religion, it is an attitude. This attitude invites for competition with the universe as an opponent. If fact, it is a protest against all concepts of the old age. In short, Islam is the actual expression of man.”⁵⁾

If we see from this point of view, Iqbal declares religion as a dynamic expression. It is a dynamic expression which owes its life to competition. It awakens the secret and the dormant powers of man. It also opens for him, a new world of possibilities. This concept of religion is totally non conventional. However, the question is, that if religion means such a revolutionary approach, then why its revolutionary manifestations are absent in the long course of history...?

Iqbal has not ignored this question while presenting the real concept of religion. Actually, he has examined this question in great depth. He looks at history from an educational and philosophical point of view. When he analyzed it intellectually, it dawned upon him that the Greek Philosophy had

4) “Bal e Jibreel,” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 40/332.

نیرہ نہ کر سکا مجھے جلوۂ دانشِ فرنگ
سرمد ہے میری آنکھ کا خاکِ مدینہ و نجف

5) *Zinda Rood*, p. 1050.

been overshadowing all historical discourse. The Greek philosophical tradition also influenced the Christian, the Jewish, and the Islamic ideologies. According to Iqbal, the traditional Greek learning is based upon inertia. Even Plato (427BC–347BC) and Aristotle (384BC–322BC) consider God as the Primal Motive. But God himself is a static entity, according to them. Heraclitus (d. late 6th century BC) declares motion as the essential reality. However, its own movement, according to his philosophical thought, is circular. The same is true of Stoics.⁶⁾ Iqbal writes:

“The Greeks, time was either unreal, as in Plato and Zeno, or moved in a circle, as in Heraclitus and the Stoics. Whatever may be the criterion by which to judge the forward steps of a creative movement, the movement itself, if conceived as cyclic, ceases to be creative. Eternal recurrence is not eternal creation — it is eternal repetition.”⁷⁾

It means that according to Zeno (b. about 488BC) and Plato (427BC–347BC), time either has no reality or it moves in a circle. The same thought has been followed by Stoics and Heraclitus. Whereas, when we try to think of creative movement as circular, its end result is the collapses of moral and ethical understanding. It is Neither an eternal change nor an eternal creativity, it is merely a constant repetition.

The philosophy of circular movement received extreme acclaim and a whole era of Muslim philosophy seems to be influenced by this philosophy also. Islam doesn't believe in such ideologies. According to Iqbal:

“When the Muslims gradually learnt that the universe was constantly moving, and that it was infinite and expanding, they challenged the Greek philosophy.”

The spirit of the Qur'anic philosophy is different from the Greek philosophy. Some Muslim scholars who initially believed in the wisdom of the Greek philosophy, started reading *Qur'an* in the light of Greek thought.

The *Qur'an* emphasizes on specific and tangible evidence instead of understanding realities

6) A philosophical school of thought:

Stoicism is a school of Hellenistic philosophy, founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early third century BC. It proved to be a popular and durable philosophy, with a following throughout Greece and the Roman Empire from its founding until all the schools of philosophy were ordered closed in 529 BC by the Emperor Justinian-I, who perceived their pagan character to be at odds with his Christian faith. The core doctrine of Stoicism concerns cosmic determinism and human freedom, and the belief that virtue is to maintain a will that is in accord with nature.

In the life of an individual, virtue is the sole good. Things such as health, happiness and possessions, etc., are of no account. Since virtue resides in the will, everything, good or bad in a man's life, depends only upon himself. He may become poor, but what of it? He can still be virtuous. A tyrant may put him in prison, but he can still persevere by living in harmony with nature. He may be sentenced to death, but he can die nobly, like Socrates. Therefore, every man has perfect freedom, provided he emancipates himself from the mundane desires.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoicism>

7) Muhammad Iqbal, 2006. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, p. 113.

on the basis of ideas only as in Greek philosophy. So, this ideology was bound to fail the test of time.

The same happened and it resulted in the birth of the real Islamic spirit of culture and tradition.

If we carefully look at some important aspects of the modern civilization, we can understand that they owe their origin to the reconstructed spirit of the Islamic thought. Iqbal wrote:

“We are now in a position to see the true significance of the intellectual revolt of Islam against Greek philosophy. The fact that this revolt originated in a purely theological interest, shows that the anti-classical spirit of the *Qur'an* asserted itself in spite of those who began with a desire to interpret Islam in the light of Greek thought.”⁸⁾

According to him, this intellectual revolt against the Greek philosophy is manifested in all branches of knowledge i.e., mathematics, astronomy, medicine, etc.⁹⁾

The Greek philosophy infatuated with inertia, compelled Iqbal to contradict it. Wherever he finds the traces of its influence, he criticizes it vehemently. In the first collection of his poetic work '*Asrar e Khudi*' (Secrets of the Self) we find him criticizing Hafiz Shirazi (1326–1388) as well as Iraqi (688AH/1289AD) whom he finds influenced by the ideas of Plato. He declares Plato as an old wolf and says:

راهبِ دیرینه افلاطون حکیم از گروهِ گوسفندانِ قدیم
بکس از ذوقِ عمل محروم بود جانِ او وارفتهءِ معدوم بود
منکرِ هنگامهءِ موجود گشت خالقِ اعیان نامشود گشت
زنده جانِ را عالم امکان خوش است مرده دلِ را عالمِ اعیان خوش است

10)

“The Greek thinker Plato was, in fact, one of the old hermit (deserter of worldly/ material things and ambitions) — and he was one of the old wolves.

As he did not possess love for action, his soul liked the obscure instead of the facts.

He denied struggle in life and created examples which had no relevance to reality.

A person whose soul is alive prefers the world of possibilities. For the dead, however, fantasies are the better choice.”

The above lines highlight the basic difference between the *Qur'an* and Greek Philosophy. The same difference later became the main conflicting point between science and religion. Iqbal looks at this conflict of science and religion not as a rationale for disparity in the general nature of science and religion, instead he finds it more appropriate to interpret it as a conflict between Christianity and science. '*History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*' by John William Drapers (May 5,

8) *Loc-Cit.*

9) *Op-Cit.*, p. 102.

10) Muhammad Iqbal. 1994. “Asrar o Ramooz” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian). Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, p. 33.

1811–January 4, 1882) was a bestseller. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan (1873–1956) translated this book into Urdu under the title ‘*Ma’arka e Mazhab o Science*’.¹¹⁾

Iqbal clarifies that Islam and science are not at conflict. In fact science is a discovery of the Muslims. Conflict of religion and science is merely a clash between science and the Catholic Church.

The Muslim educational thought, which brought a revolution amongst the western intelligentsia. At this point the Roman Catholics clashed with this revolution of knowledge. Dr. Draper penned down the history of this revolution.¹²⁾

Iqbal writes that Europe took a long time to admit this reality. He further quotes reference from ‘*The Making of Humanity*’, by Robert Briffault.

What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs’.¹³⁾

Iqbal thinks that the Islamic thought has emerged through the inductive method. The inductive method is an experimental or scientific method in which general principles are evolved through deduction from some particular facts. This is a key point, with the help of which one can understand Iqbal’s concept of Islam. While addressing at the Habiba Hall of the Islamia College Lahore on 4 March 1927, Iqbal had said:

“Religion, philosophy, physics and other branches of knowledge and art are all different paths which lead to the same destination. The concept of clash between religion and science

11) This translation was first published by the Anjuman e Urdu Hyderabad Dakkan, printed at Rafah e A’am Steam Press, Lahore in 1910, with a life sketch of Dr. Draper by the translator. A fresh reprint is from Al-Faisal, Lahore, 1995.

12) Afzal, Muhammad Rafiqe. 1969. *Guftar e Iqbal*. Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab, p.23.

13) Briffault, Robert. 1928. *The Making of Humanity*, London, p.191 / Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh, p.105. At this point Iqbal further quotes:

“Let me quote one or two passages from Briffault’s *Making of Humanity*, ‘...it was under their successors at that Oxford school that Roger Bacon learned Arabic and the Arabic science. Neither Roger Bacon nor his later namesake has any title to be credited with having introduced the experimental method. Roger Bacon was no more than one of the apostles of Muslim science and method to Christian Europe; and he never wearied of declaring that the knowledge of Arabic and Arabian science was for his contemporaries the only way to true knowledge. Discussions as to who was the originator of the experimental method... are part of the colossal misrepresentation of the origins of European civilization. The experimental method of the Arabs was by Bacon’s time widespread and eagerly cultivated throughout Europe’ (pp.200–01).

“Science is the most momentous contribution of Arab civilization to the modern world, but its fruits were slow in ripening. Not until long after Moorish culture had sunk back into darkness did the giant to which it had given birth rise in his might. It was not science which brought Europe back to life. Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life’ (p.202)

“For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world, and the supreme source of its victory — natural science and the scientific spirit’ (p.190).

“The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to Arab culture, it owes its existence. The ancient world was, as we saw, pre-scientific. The astronomy and mathematics of the Greek were a foreign importation never thoroughly acclimatized in Greek culture. The Greeks systematized, generalized, and theorized, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation, experimental inquiry, were altogether alien to the Greek temperament. Only in Hellenistic Alexandria was any approach to scientific work conducted in the ancient classical world’ (p.113).”

is not Islamic.... It is Islam which has taught the inductive method of logic to the man. Islam has taught to reject the method of guessing and conjecturing as a basis for learning and this very fact became the cause for the birth of modern scholarship".¹⁴⁾

For this very reason, Iqbal believes that it was only Islam which taught the experimental method of learning to the world. He has written very elaborately that:

"It is absolutely wrong to believe that the credit for exploring the experimental method of scholarship goes to the west".¹⁵⁾

He also writes that Roger Bacon's views of science, too, have been derived from the Islamic tradition of knowledge. He poses the question as from where did Roger Bacon take the lessons of learning and scholarship? This question has only one answer — from the educational centers of Andalusia (Spain). He declared that the fifth chapter of Roger Bacon's book '*Opus Majus*' was a plagiarized form of Ibn al Haytham's '*Optics*'.¹⁶⁾ In his poem '*Musafir*' Iqbal says:

اصل او جز لذت ایجاد نیت	حکمت اشیا فرنگی زاد نیت
این گهر از دست ما افتاده است	نیک اگر بینی مسلمان زاده است
علم و حکمت را بنا دیگر ننهاد	چون عرب اندر اروپا پر کشاد
ماصلش افرنگیان برداشتمند	دانه آن صحرا نشینان کاشتمند
باز صیدش کن که او از قاف ماست	این پری از شیشهء اسلاف ماست
زآنکه او با اهل حق دار دستیز	لیکن از تهذیب لاهوتی گریز

14) *Gulfar e Iqbal*, p. 23.

15) *Loc-Cit.*

16) At this point a scholarly foot note of late Prof Saeed Sheikh is worth reading: Cf. *Opus Majus*, trans. Robert Belle Burke, Vol. II, Part V (pp. 419–82). It is important to note that Sarton's observation on Roger Bacon's work on optics is very close to that of Allama Iqbal. 'His optics', says Sarton, 'was essentially based upon that of Ibn al-Haitham, with small additions and practical applications' (op-cit., II, 957). As reported by Dr. M. S. Namus, Allama Iqbal helped him in understanding the rotographs of the only MS. (No. 2460 in Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) of Ibn Haitham's *Tahrir al-Manazir* for a number of days; cf. *Ibn al-Haitham: Proceedings of the Celebrations of 1000th Anniversary* (held in November 1969 under the auspices of Hamdard National Foundation Pakistan, Karachi), p. 128.

See, however, Professor A. I. Sabra's scholarly article: 'Ibn al-Haytham' in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, VI, 189–210, especially p. 205 where he gives an up-to-date information about the MSS of Ibn Haitham's *Kitab al-Manazir*. According to Professor Sabra, 'The reference in Brockelmann to a recension of this work in the Paris MS, ar. 2460 (Brockelmann has 2640) is mistaken; the MS is a recension of Euclid's Optics which is attributed on the title page to Hasan ibn (Musa ibn) Shakir'. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh, p. 182.

17) Addressing to Zahir Shah of Afghanistan (d. July 23. 2007) see "Pas Che Bayad Kard" in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian), Poem: '*Musafir*', p. 73.

“Knowledge and scholarship are, in fact, dependent upon creativity. And this asset was gifted to the world by the Muslims. When the Arabs spread their influence over Europe, they provided a new basis to the knowledge and learning. The crop sowed by these desert-dwellers, was harvested by the Europeans.”

In Iqbal’s view, the life according to Islam is based upon solid facts. Iqbal rightly traces the foundations of his views in the *Qur’an*. “The teachings of the *Qur’an* are the teachings of contemplation into the soul and in the universe. Pointing to this fact, Iqbal said that the *Qur’an* repeatedly teaches the man to learn from observation and experiment. The ultimate goal is to conquer the forces of nature. The *Qur’an*, therefore, teaches the human beings, in very clear terms, that if they dominate the forces of nature, they would be able to reach even beyond the stars”.¹⁸⁾

جہاں اور بھی میں ابھی بے نامود کہ غالی نہیں ہے ضمیر وجود
ہر ایک منتظر تیری یلغار کا تری شوخی فکر و کردار کا
یہ ہے مقصد گردش روزگار کہ تیری خودی تجھ پہ ہو آشکار¹⁹⁾

“The possibilities of the universe have not yet exhausted — many worlds are still to appear — each one of them is waiting to be discovered by your thought and character — discovering the possibilities hidden inside you is, in fact, the purpose of life. And also that you recognize your selfhood.”

And he also says:

اسی روز و شب میں الجھ کر نہ رہ جا
کہ تیرے زمان و مکاں اور بھی ہیں²⁰⁾

“Do not get betrayed by the circle of day and night which surrounds you. These limits of time and space are only a façade — your position is much higher than all these things. For you, there are other times and other spaces beyond this world.”

For Iqbal ‘*ishq*’ (passionate love), creativity and progressiveness are one and the same thing. The world needs a positive and fresh outlook which is only possible through creative thinking. ‘*Ishq*’ motivates creative thinking and life is not possible without movement and revolution. The new world created by movement and revolution awakens novel ideas and creative thinking. So, as long as the creative thinking is there, man will continue to progress.²¹⁾

18) “Bal e Jibreel” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 61/353.

19) *Op-Cit.*, Poem: ‘Saqi Nama’, p. 128/420.

20) “Bal e Jibreel” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 61/353.

21) Khalifa Abdul Hakim. 1968. *Fikr e Iqbal*. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture June, p. 122.

According to Iqbal there is no limit to the advancement of the prophet-hood as well as the common human beings. Progress continues, and it will continue!²²⁾ However, the purpose of prophet-hood has been completed after establishing the truth of life. The prophet-hood highlighted the fact that life is not stagnant. Rather, it is traveling for unending revolution, advancement and possibilities. Islam is a complete code. However, this does not mean that Islam has determined a final shape of life. On the contrary, Islam advises that no shape of life is worthy of worship.

صورت نہ پرستم من بت خانہ شکستم من
آن سیلِ سبک سیرم، ہر بند گستم من²³⁾

“I do not worship appearances. I am the one who shatters them. I am like a flash flood which breaks every barrage.”

This concept of the *Qur'an* promoted the trend of polishing one's wisdom and mind. That is why, there was no such period as the Europe's 'Dark Ages' in the civilization which was based upon the Islamic teachings. The religious groups which emerged during various phases of Muslim history also had differences of thought. The *Mutazilites* and the *Asharites* also emerged due to differences of thought. This fact proves that the Islamic history and civilization believes in movement and progress. It is based upon contemplation into the soul and in the universe to reach the ultimate truth.

The Polish astronomer Nicolas Copernicus (1473–1543) had to face bitter opposition from the 'Church' when he presented the theory of revolution of the earth. Later, when another astronomer, Kepler (1571–1630) and the Italian scientist Galileo (15 Feb. 1564–April 1642) presented the idea of movement and revolution of the earth with more vigor, they also had to face strong opposition from the religious circles. Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), the Jewish thinker of Holland declared that the God and the laws of nature were two components for revealing the truth. He had to face the decree of atheism. However, in Islamic history, the proponents of pragmatism have never faced any opposition of this nature.

سمجھ میں آئی حقیقت نہ جب ستاروں کی اسی نیال میں رائیں گزار دیں میں نے
ڈرا سکیں نہ کلیا کی مجھ کو تواہیں سکھایا مسئلہ گردشِ زمیں میں نے
کشمش کا راز ہویا کیا زمانے پر لگا کے آئندہ عقلِ ڈوریں میں نے²⁴⁾

“When I couldn't understand the reality of stars I sacrificed my sleep.

When church warned me against my research I continued it and ultimately discovered the theory of rotational movement of earth.”

22) *Op-Cit.*, p. 123.

23) “Payam e Mashriq” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian), p. 122.

24) “Bang e Dara” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), Poem: ‘Sarguzasht e Aadam’, p. 82.

In the Islamic history, the tradition of rational interpretation of the facts of life has been so strong that in some cases domination of rationalism gave birth to differences and emergence of permanent schools of thought. Stress on logic by the Mutazilites is well known. They had gone too far in the rational interpretation of life. They even wanted to interpret the divine revelations on rational standards. Due to difference of thought, they were called ‘Mutazilites’ (the separatists). But, according to Iqbal, this dispute was unlike the dispute which arose between the enlightened scholars and the priests of Europe. On the contrary, this was an intellectual debate which aimed at discussing whether one had the right to examine the divine revelations on rational standards or not...? “Europe has been rather slow to recognize the Islamic origin of her scientific method. But full recognition of the fact has at last come.”²⁵⁾

The result of the over-involvement with rationalism was that the Muslims got influenced by the Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophy, as mentioned earlier, does not accept the theory of movement. And when the idea of movement leaves the basic thought, then the scientific outlook also departs. The Greek philosophy was translated into Arabic, and a number of books were written in this connection. Schools of thought of critics emerged. So much so that Ghazali (1058–1111) had to write ‘*Tahafut al Falasifa*’ (*تهافت الفلاسفة*) to undo the impacts of the Greek philosophy. Moreover, he also rejected philosophical fallacies in ‘*Almunqiz min al Zalal*’ (*المنقذ من الضلال*). Later on, Ibn- Rushd, known as Averroes (1126–1198) wrote his ‘*Tahafat al Tahafa*,’ in response to ‘*Tahafat al Falasifa*,’ of Ghazali. These facts highlight the freedom of thought in the Muslim society and the influence of the Greek philosophy. In Iqbal’s view, the spirit of the Greek philosophy is at clash with the spirit of Islam, as mentioned earlier.

To Iqbal, as long as the Muslim thought remained under the influence of the Greek thought, it remained away from the agile spirit of the *Qur’an*. The *Qur’an* highlights the moving face of life. According to Islam, life is based upon solid facts. Iqbal rightly traces the origins of his ideas in the *Qur’an*. Syed Nazeer Niazi, his friend & assistant, has written that when Albert Einstein (March 14, 1879–April 18, 1955) gave the idea of ‘Growing Universe’, Iqbal remained pondering over it for a considerable time. He turned to the *Qur’an* and fixed his eyes at this *Ayah* of *Surah Fatir*. “...Yazeed fil khalq ma yasha...” (*يزيد في الخلق ما يشاء*)²⁶⁾

“He keeps on giving growth to his creation in whichever manner He wishes”. Thus we know that life is a continuous process. Therefore, it cannot be called stagnant. Moreover, Iqbal explains the agile view of the *Qur’an* with the *Ayah* of *Surah Al Rehman* “...kull yaomin howa fi shan...” (*كل يوم هو في شأن*)²⁷⁾

“Each day, He appears in a new shape” and the *Ayah* of *Surah Inshaq* “...latarkabunna tabaqan ani tabaq...” (*لتركبن طبقا عن طبق*)²⁸⁾

25) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 103.

26) *Qur’an* 35:1.

27) *Qur’an* 55:29.

28) *Qur’an* 84:19.

“You have to climb ladder after ladder”.

This concept of movement appears in different shapes in Iqbal's poetry.

29) گمان مبر کہ بپایان رسید کارِ مغان ہزار بادہ نا خوردہ در رگ تاک است

“Do not think that the creative process of the universe has been completed. The grapes still hold much wine.”

30) یہ کائنات ابھی ناتمام ہے شاید کہ آرہی ہے دما دم صدائے کن فیکوں!

“This universe, I think, is still incomplete, because the process of development is going on.”

One finds this concept in his poetry from the very beginning like: ‘Chand Aur Tary,’³¹⁾ ‘Sitara,’³²⁾ ‘Saqi Nama’³³⁾ and ‘Ghazal 30’ in “Bal e Jibreel”³⁴⁾ etc.

For example, see this verse from a poem ‘Talba e Aligarh College Ke Naam’ which appears in his very first Urdu poetic collection “Bang e Dara”:

35) آتی تھی کوہ سے صد ازا حیات ہے سکوں کتنا تھا مورِ ناتواں لطفِ خرام اور ہے

“There was a sound from the height that the mystery of life lies in constancy, but a petty ant — of the view that the beauty of life was in movement.”

Later, Iqbal wrote ‘Zindagi o Amal’ in response to Hyna's (1797–1856) poem ‘Sawalaat’ in “Payam e Mashriq”:

36) ساحلِ افتادہ گفت گرچہ بسی زلیستم بیچ نہ معلوم شد آہ کہ من چلیستم
موج ز خود رفتہ و تیز خرامید و گفت ہستم اگر میروم گر نزوم نیستم

“The low-spirited beach said that after passage of such a long time, I still do not know what I am? The brisk wave moved and said, as long as I am moving, I am a wave. When I will cease to have motion, I will cease to exist.”

29) “Payam e Mashriq” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian), p. 76.

30) “Bal e Jibreel” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 28/320.

31) “Bang e Dara” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 119.

32) *Op-Cit.*, p. 147.

33) “Bal e Jibreel” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 122/414.

34) *Op-Cit.*, p. 53/345.

35) “Bang e Dara” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 115.

36) “Payam e Mashriq” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian), p. 104.

It means that movement is life. The critics of this idea of Iqbal argue that life is not mere movement. When we move forward we also have to move backwards. Life is rise, as well as fall. This objection could have been valid if Iqbal had not given due importance to the concept of constancy (*Sabaat*).

In fact, to Iqbal, Islam establishes a world which is constant as it is firmly attached to its basis. But as it is a living thing, it is consistently in motion. He has dealt with this perplexity in the, *Javed Nama*’ in the form of an imaginative dialogue between Jamal-ud-Din Afghani (1838–1897) and *Zinda Rood* (actually, he is Iqbal himself). Thus through this dialogue, Iqbal has established that he has not altogether rejected the importance of constancy in life.

زورقِ ماغاکیان بی نمانداست کس نداند عالمِ قرآن کجاست

37)

“We, the people of this earth, are helpless and nobody knows where is the world, that the *Qur’an* wants to create?”

Replying to this query, Jamal-ud-Din Afghani narrates the details of that world. He says:

“That world is still hidden inside our hearts. The humanity is awaiting the nation which will awaken that world. That world is free from the discriminations of colour and blood. The dusk of that world is brighter than the dawn of Europe. The master and the slave are equal. It is as vast as the heart of a ‘*Momin*’ (True Believer). One glimpse of that world had awakened the soul of a person like Umar (Umar ibn al-Khattāb, c. 581–83 CE – 7 November 644), (*RA*). That world is eternal. It is so strong from the inside that fear of transition (change) does not perturb it. However, from the outside it is harbinger of unabated change and revolution. This world exists inside you. You should discover it.”

The detail of this imaginative dialogue between Jamal-ud-Din Afghani and *Zinda Rood* provides satisfying answer to the objections raised over Iqbal’s concept of movement. It has been proved that he does not neglect the importance of constancy. If he says that:

فریبِ نظر ہے سکون و ثبات تزپتا ہے ہر ذری کائنات

38)

“Constancy is an illusion in fact every particle of this universe is kinetic.”

He also says that:

باطنِ او از تغیر بی غمی ظاہرِ او انقلابِ ہر دم

39)

37) “Javed Nama” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian), p. 67.

38) “Bal e Jibreel” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 126/418.

39) “Javed Nama” in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian), p. 68.

“It is so strong from the inside that fear of transition (change) does not perturb it. However, from the outside it is harbinger of unabated change and revolution.”

This fact makes his concept of movement, a balanced idea.

Now a question arises as from where did Iqbal discover this principle of movement in Islam...? The answer is — ‘*ijtihad*’. What is ‘*ijtihad*’? Iqbal has written:

“The word literally means to exert. In the terminology of the Islamic law, it means to exert with a view to form an independent judgment on a legal question. The idea, I believe, has its origin in a well-known verse of the *Qur'an* — ‘and to those who exert we show our path.’”⁴⁰⁾

‘*Ijtihad*’ (intellectual endeavour) does not mean unbridled freedom. It does not mean that one can change an injunction according to his whims whenever one wants to. The actual fact is that ‘*ijtihad*’ cannot be exercised without recourse to the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (way of the Holy Prophet, PBUH) as its basis. The deductions which emerge from ‘*ijtihad*’ though seem new, but they are not. However, we can say that they are not new in content but at the same time they are new in shape. This difference of content and shape has been ignored by the critics of Iqbal's idea of movement. The constancy of the content and change of the shape is in fact Iqbal's idea of movement. And he has termed it as the soul and spirit of the Islamic civilization.

‘*Ijtihad*’ is, in fact, a symbol of life. Life unfolds itself with every passing moment. Therefore, this quality should also have been present in a living religion. Islam's nature is like a running ocean. The difference between stagnant water and an ever-moving ocean is clear. Iqbal, very rightly, conditions ‘*ijtihad*’ with character, contemplation, good understanding of religion and freedom.

The concept of ‘Finality of the Prophet-hood’ also protects the Islamic civilization from getting stagnant. Because of this concept the function of the prophet-hood has been transferred to the *Ummah*. Thus, every member of the Muslim community has been entrusted with the mission of the Prophet (PBUH) i.e. love to mankind and leading them towards the ultimate success. Every Muslim is expected to transfer the knowledge of this religion of peace & tranquillity to others. He should not just remain contented with the development of his own being. Iqbal, in his Lecture “*The Spirit of Muslim Culture*”, has cited from ‘*Lataif Quddusi*’ a saying of Sheikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi:

“Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God, if I had reached that point, I would never have returned.”⁴¹⁾

Through this extract, Iqbal has explained the difference between the prophetic and the mystic

40) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 117. Cf. 29:69.

41) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lecture V: The Spirit of Muslim Culture p. 99. Cf. ‘Abd al-Quddus Gangohi, *Lataif-i Quddusia*, ed. Shaikh Rukn al-Din, Latifah 79; (Original text is in Persian).

types of consciousness. For a prophet, sharing his spiritual experience with the *Ummah* is more important than sheer advancement of his own being. That is why the Prophet returns back even after reaching the zenith, so that he may transfer the knowledge of his experience to the mankind.

Development of the personality of his reader is, in fact, the basic purpose of Iqbal's thought and poetry. He, therefore, criticises the Greek philosophy. He narrates the idea of movement and for the very same purpose prefers prophet hood. In this connection, he presents his concept of 'selfhood' (*khudi*).

By declaring the scientific method as a legacy and an asset of the Muslims, Iqbal has altogether changed the very basis of all advancements of modern science. The technology given by the modern science has not proved totally beneficial for the development and strengthening of human character and personality. The human personalities and societies are bitterly suffering despite all the scientific advancement. The world has become a global village, yet the distances between human beings have widened. In Iqbal's own words, the modern world has become an angel of death which has put the human soul in the clutches of financial worry. The weightless man is drifting with the flood of the society. His selfhood (*khudi*) has been crushed by the modern industrial society. According to Iqbal, the remedy to this situation lies in the escape of man from the mechanical influences of the economic activity. He should not let himself driven by the societal priorities. Iqbal, therefore, invites the man to return to his own being which is like a flower, no matter its petals have been blown away. The man has lost himself along with his wealth of wisdom. However, if he discovers his real being, he can create new lands.

42) شَدِ پَرِشَانِ بَرگِ گلِ چُون بویِ خویش ای زِ خودِ رَم کرده باز آسویِ خویش

"In order to get rid of the mechanical influences and cruelties of the modern era, the man needs to produce noble human values and qualities."

Indicating the same requirement, Iqbal had said:

"So long as this so-called democracy, this accursed nationalism and this degraded imperialism are not shattered.... So long as men do not demonstrate by their actions that they believe that the whole world is the family of God, so long as distinctions of race, colour and geographical nationalities are not wiped out completely, they will never be able to lead a happy and contented life and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity will never materialise."⁴³⁾

In Iqbal's opinion, humanity needs a democracy which is based on spirituality. And the spiritual democracy is the ultimate aim of Islam.⁴⁴⁾

42) Muhammad Iqbal. 1981. "Asrar e Khudi" in *Kulliyat e Iqbal* (Persian). Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, p. 69.

43) New Years Message telecast by All India Radio 1st January 1935 (see Khurram Ali Shafique, *Iqbal in Pictures*. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan 2007, p. 194).

44) See Iqbal's words:

In this way Iqbal, as a balanced thinker, considers Islam as a moderate religion since its beginning. In this context, he is an important voice from the South Asia, who rightly set the trend to consider religious discourse as an attitude which is creative and dynamic and explores the possibilities of human beings. He is of opinion that by reconstructing the social life in the light of ultimate principles one can appreciate his standing and meet the challenges of the ever-changing life.

The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement. The Muslim, on the other hand, is in possession of these ultimate ideas of the basis of a revelation, which, speaking from the inmost depths of life, internalizes its own apparent externality. With him the spiritual basis of life is a matter of conviction for which even the least enlightened man among us can easily lay down his life; and in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth. Early Muslims emerging out of the spiritual slavery of pre-Islamic Asia were not in a position to realize the true significance of this basic idea. Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam. (*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lecture VI: The Principle of Movement in Islam, p. 180)

See also: Iqbal's 'Statement on Islam and Nationalism in Reply to a Statement of Maulana Husain Ahmad': 'The history of man is an infinite process of mutual conflicts, sanguine battles and civil wars. In these circumstances can we have among mankind a constitution, the social life of which is based upon peace and security? The *Qur'an*'s answer is: Yes, provided man takes for his ideal the propagation of the Unity of God in the thoughts and actions of mankind. The search for such an ideal and its maintenance is no miracle of political manoeuvring: it is a peculiar greatness of the Holy Prophet that the self-invented distinctions and superiority complexes of the nations of the world are destroyed and there comes into being a community which can be styled *Ummat-am Muslimat-al laka* (a community submissive to Thee, *Qur'an* 2:128) and to whose thoughts and actions the divine dictate *shuhada'a 'al-an nas-i* (a community that bears witness to the truth before all mankind, *Qur'an* 2:143) justly applies'. (*Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, pp. 262-63)